

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 IO-13 JUSE-00
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INRE-00 NSCE-00 SS-15 SSO-00 USIE-00 AID-05
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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8643
INFO DEAHQS WASHDC IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MEXICO 03518

SAN JOSE FOR JACQUES I KIERE, DEA

EO 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: SNAR, MX
SUBJECT: DEA PARTICIPATION IN GOM ERADICATION CAMPAIGN

REF: (A) MEXICO 901; (B) MEXICO 1094; (C) MEXICO 1588;
(D) STATE 26696; (E) GENEVA 2362

1. SUMMARY: REFS (A) AND (B) REPORTED ON THE GOM'S REQUEST OF JANUARY 13 THAT ALL DEA TDY SPOTTERS BE WITHDRAWN FOLLOWING A BRIEF COUNTRY-WIDE RECONNAISSANCE SWEEP AND EXAMINED WHAT WE BELIEVED TO BE THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE USG AND GOM POSITIONS ON THIS QUESTION. REF (C) PROPOSED A USG POSITION AND COURSE OF ACTION, WHICH WAS APPROVED IN REF (D). HOWEVER, BECAUSE ATTORNEY GENERAL FLORES FELL ILL, HE WAS NOT ABLE TO INITIATE THE DISCUSSIONS WITH U.S. ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL ON WHICH THE COURSE OF ACTION WAS PREDICATED. MEANWHILE, DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL ALBA-LEYVA STATED TO SENIOR U.S. NARCOTICS OFFICIALS IN GENEVA THAT THE GOM POSITION WOULD BE REASSESSED AND THAT A MODIFIED DEA PARTICIPATION MIGHT
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BE POSSIBLE. DUE TO WEATHER DIFFICULTIES IN SOUTHERN MEXICO THE RECONNAISSANCE SWEEP HAS BEEN DELAYED, PERMITTING DEA SPOTTERS TO CONTINUE FLYING. WITHIN THE PAST WEEK THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S EXECUTIVE OFFICER, FERNANDO BAEZA, INDICATED THAT CONTINUED GOM MILITARY OBJECTIONS WOULD REQUIRE THE DEPARTURE OF THE DEA SPOTTERS WHEN THE RECON SWEEP IS COMPLETED THIS WEEK. WHEN PRESSED, BAEZA

PROPOSED AN ALTERNATIVE THAT WOULD PERMIT THE SPOTTERS TO REMAIN THROUGH APRIL AS "TRAINEES". END SUMMARY.

2. CURRENT STATUS: ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL COULD NOT VISIT MEXICO AS SCHEDULED AND THE CONTINUED ILLNESS OF ATTORNEY GENERAL FLORES HAS PRECLUDED EMBASSY DISCUSSIONS WITH HIM ALONG THE LINES INDICATED IN REFS (C) AND (D). MEANWHILE, DEA SPOTTERS HAVE BEEN FLYING RECONNAISSANCE MISSIONS AND PROCEEDING TO THEIR TRIZO ASSIGNMENT LOCATIONS AS THEIR PORTION OF THE COUNTRY-WIDE RECON SWEEP IS COMPLETED. THUS, THE FOUR DEA SPOTTERS ASSIGNED TO CULIACAN RETURNED THERE LAST WEEK.

3. WHEN THE FOUR SPOTTERS REACHED CULIACAN, THE MEXICAN ZONE COORDINATOR WELCOMED THEM, BUT INFORMED THEM THAT BAEZA HAD SAID THEY COULD NOT FLY. THEY INFORMED THE EMBASSY AND, DURING A MEETING ON REMOTE SENSING FEBRUARY 21, THE NARCOTICS ATTACHE REQUESTED BAEZA TO INFORM HIS ZONE COORDINATOR IN CULIACAN THAT THE DEA PERSONNEL COULD FLY ON BOARD MEXICAN RECONNAISSANCE AND SPRAY AIRCRAFT. BAEZA READILY AGREED TO DO SO. WHEN, THE FOLLOWING DAY, THE DEA PERSONNEL IN CULIACAN WERE NOT PERMITTED TO FLY, THE NARCOTICS ATTACHE SENT HIS TRIZO COORDINATOR TO BAEZA TO PRESS FOR RESOLUTION. BAEZA, IN THAT OFFICER'S PRESENCE, TELEPHONED CULIACAN AND INSTRUCTED THE ZONE COORDINATOR TO LET DEA SPOTTERS FLY. NO TIME LIMIT WAS MENTIONED BY
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EITHER SIDE DURING THESE DISCUSSIONS.

4. ON FEBRUARY 23, THE ZONE COORDINATOR IN CULIACAN INFORMED THE DEA PERSONNEL THERE THAT HE HAD BEEN TOLD THEY COULD FLY "UNTIL THE RECONNAISSANCE SWEEP IN THE SOUTH IS COMPLETED", WHICH SHOULD OCCUR THIS WEEK. ON FEBRUARY 24 THE NARCOTICS ATTACHE TELEPHONED BAEZA TO INDICATE THAT THERE SEEMED TO BE SOME MISUNDERSTANDING AND TO REQUEST BAEZA TO CLARIFY THAT DEA SPOTTERS COULD FLY UNTIL FLORES HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO RAISE THE ISSUE WITH THE AMBASSADOR. BAEZA DID NOT REPLY IMMEDIATELY BUT INSTEAD REQUESTED THAT THE NARCOTICS ATTACHE MEET WITH HIM.

5. ON FEBRUARY 24 THE NARCOTICS ATTACHE AND HIS TRIZO COORDINATOR CALLED ON BAEZA WHO REPEATED HIS EARLIER STATEMENTS THAT THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE OBJECTED STRENUOUSLY TO THE PRESENCE OF DEA SPOTTERS IN THE FIELD, ETC. HE ADDED THAT, SINCE MILITARY PARTICIPATION WAS OF FAR MORE VALUE TO THE CAMPAIGN THAN DEA'S, FLORES COULD NOT KEEP THE DEA SPOTTERS. THE EMBASSY OFFICERS NOTED THAT WE, TOO, HAVE POLITICAL PRESSURES AND THAT THE

PRESENCE OF SPOTTERS PERMITTED DEA TO REPORT FAVORABLY TO THE CONGRESS ON THE PROGRESS OF THE CAMPAIGN AND TO SUPPORT GOM REQUESTS FOR FURTHER ASSISTANCE. BAEZA AGREED TO DISCUSS THE PROBLEM ONCE AGAIN WITH FLORES INCLUDING OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT NO CHANGES WOULD BE MADE UNTIL FLORES RAISED THE ISSUE WITH BELL OR THE AMBASSADOR, AND TO INFORM THE NARCOTICS ATTACHE ON SATURDAY OF THE DECISION.

6. WHEN, BY NOON ON FEBRUARY 27, BAEZA HAD STILL NOT

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CONTACTED THE NARCOTICS ATTACHE, THE SPECIAL ASSISTANT TELEPHONED BAEZA TO TELL HIM THAT DEA NEEDED AN ANSWER SOONEST TO FACILITATE THE MOVEMENT OF PERSONNEL TO AND FROM THE UNITED STATES. BAEZA REQUESTED THAT THE SPECIAL ASSISTANT CALL ON HIM ASAP.

7. WHEN THE SPECIAL ASSISTANT ARRIVED AT BAEZA'S OFFICE, THE LATTER ADMITTED THAT HE HAD NOT CALLED THE NARCOTICS ATTACHE BECAUSE THE ONLY ANSWER HE COULD GIVE WOULD BE NEGATIVE. HE SAID HE HOPED THAT THE USG REALIZED THAT FLORES IS BY FAR THE MOST FRIENDLY CABINET OFFICIAL TOWARD THE USG AND THAT HE HAD PERFORMED EFFECTIVELY FOR THE USG SINCE TAKING OFFICE. BAEZA NOTED THAT, BY INSISTING ON THE PRESENCE OF DEA SPOTTERS WE WERE PUTTING FLORES "IN A BOX WITH NO EXIT" AND RISKING ESSENTIAL MILITARY PARTICIPATION IN THE CAMPAIGN FOR NO REAL BENEFIT. HE SAID THAT IF THIS ISSUE WERE TO SURFACE IN A CABINET MEETING, WHICH SECRETARY OF DEFENSE GALVAN COULD WELL PRECIPITATE, FLORES WOULD LOSE HANDS DOWN. WORSE YET,

BAEZA STATED, OTHER MINISTERS COULD EASILY RALLY TO GALVAN'S POSITION AND WEAKEN FLORES' ABILITY TO BE SO FORTHCOMING WITH US IN OTHER AREAS AS WELL. HE NOTED THAT BOTH IN MEXICO AND THE UNITED STATES THERE ARE INDIVIDUALS WHO
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ARE DISTURBED BY THE EFFORTS OF PRESIDENT LOPEZ PORTILLO TO WORK WITH THE UNITED STATES AND THAT THE QUESTION OF DEA SPOTTERS WAS ITSELF A FLAMABLE ISSUE, WITH ANTI-GOM SPOKESMEN IN THE U.S. ARGUING THAT THEY MUST REMAIN WHILE ANTI-U.S. SPOKESMEN IN MEXICO ARGUE THAT THEIR CONTINUED PRESENCE IS INTOLERABLE. BETTER FOR BOTH SIDES, BAEZA URGED, TO REMOVE THE QUESTION BY VOLUNTARILY WITHDRAWING THE SPOTTERS.

8. SPECIAL ASSISTANT NOTED THAT THERE ARE POLITICAL IMPERATIVE IN THE UNITED STATES AS WELL AS IN MEXICO. HE REVIEWED COMMENTS MADE DURING SENATE JUVENILE DELINQUENCY SUBCOMMITTEE HEARINGS, AS WELL AS STATEMENTS BY INDIVIDUAL CONGRESSMEN WHICH WERE WIDELY REPORTED IN MEXICO (MEXICO 2930). BAEZA SAID THAT SUCH PUBLIC STATEMENTS PLAYED DIRECTLY INTO THE HANDS OF THOSE IN MEXICO WHO OPPOSE DEA PARTICIPATION BY CALLING ATTENTION TO DEA'S PRESENCE AND FURTHER LIMITING THE NEGOTIATION ROOM AVAILABLE TO FLORES. HE DID, HOWEVER, ADMIT THAT SUCH STATEMENTS COULD BE TAKEN AS SIGNS OF PRESSURES WITHIN THE USG SIMILAR TO COUNTERPRESSURES OPERATING IN MEXICO. WHEN THE SPECIAL ASSISTANT ARGUED THAT SOME MANNER OF ACCOMMODATING THESE PRESSURES MUST BE FOUND, BAEZA SAID HE AND FLORES HAD DISCUSSED THE POSSIBILITY OF ACCEPTING DEA SPOTTERS FOR THE BALANCE OF THE CAMPAIGN IF THE EMBASSY WOULD WRITE TO FLORES AND REQUEST HIM TO "TRAIN PERSONNEL OF DEA IN THE RECONNAISSANCE AND ERADICATION TECHNIQUES USED BY MEXICO SO THAT, IF POSSIBLE, THESE SKILLS COULD BE APPLIED ELSEWHERE". SUCH A LETTER, WHICH NEED NOT BE MADE PUBLIC, WOULD PERMIT FLORES TO ARGUE THAT THE PRESENCE OF DEA SPOTTERS, WHILE NOT ESSENTIAL TO THE CAMPAIGN ITSELF, WAS A FORM OF TRANSFERRING MEXICAN TECHNOLOGY TO OTHERS AND VERY MUCH IN
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MEXICO'S POLITICAL INTEREST. SPECIAL ASSISTANT AGREED TO PROPOSE THIS APPROACH TO THE EMBASSY BUT DECLINED TO COMMENT ON ITS MERITS.

9. COMMENT: BAEZA'S PROPOSAL WOULD DEFINITELY PERMIT

DEA SPOTTERS TO REMAIN UNTIL MID-APRIL AS SCHEDULED.
BAEZA CLEARLY IMPLIED THAT THIS DEVICE WOULD SERVE TO
PROVIDE DEA A GRACEFUL EXIT FROM THE CAMPAIGN AND DID
NOT MENTION WHETHER SUBSEQUENT GROUPS COULD BE "TRAINED".
THIS PROPOSAL WOULD APPEAR TO MEET THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
OF OUR EXISTING GUIDANCE (REFS C AND D).

10. ACCEPTABLE OR NOT, BAEZA'S PROPOSAL IS THE FIRST
GOM ATTEMPT TO MEET USG AS WELL AS GOM NEEDS ON THIS
ISSUE. IF IT IS UNACCEPTABLE, A COUNTERPROPOSAL ALONG
THE LINES OF A REDUCED BUT CONTINUING DEA PRESENCE IN
A DIFFERENT MODE AS SUGGESTED BY ALBA-LEYVA (PARA TWO
REF E) MIGHT BE DEVELOPED. WE VIEW ALBA-LEYVA'S REMARKS
AND AUTHORITY WITH SOME SKEPTICISM, HOWEVER, SINCE HE
WAS OVER-RULED BY FLORES TWO DAYS AFTER HE WROTE TO THE
EMBASSY AND CONCURRED IN OUR TRIZO PROPOSAL. HIS ROLE
SINCE THAT TIME HAS BEEN, AT BEST, UNCLEAR.

11. ACTION REQUESTED: AMBASSADOR LUCEY IS IN WASHINGTON
FOR ARA CHIEFS OF MISSION CONFERENCE AND WE SUGGEST THAT
SENIOR USG OFFICIALS CONCERNED MEET WITH HIM TO WORK OUT
HOW EMBASSY SHOULD PROCEED. ORIGINAL GUIDANCE IN REF (D)
HAS BEEN OVERTAKEN SINCE GOM IS PROCEEDING ON THE BASIS
THAT, ABSENT DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN ATTORNEYS GENERAL BELL
AND FLORES, ITS ORIGINAL REQUEST THAT WE WITHDRAW THE

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SPOTTERS REMAINS OPERATIVE. OUR PRESENT OPTIONS ARE:
(A) TO WITHDRAW THE DEA SPOTTERS, (B) TO REQUEST "TRAIN-
ING" AS BAEZA PROPOSED, OR (C) TO PROPOSE WORKABLE ALTER-

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